

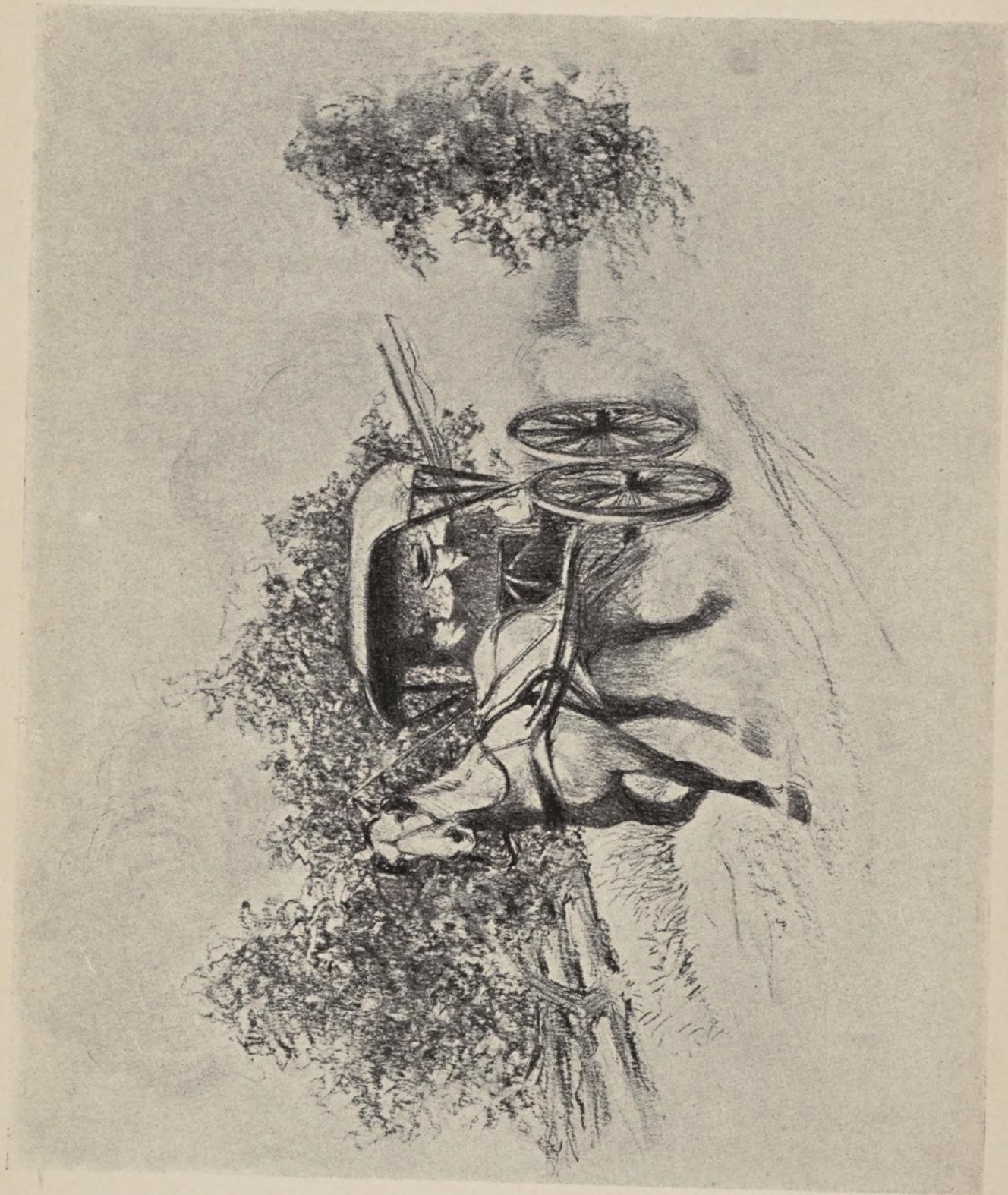
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Select Short Stories

IRENE MYERS



ALL DAY THEY TRAVELED.

The Face in the Forest

What Big Sister Brought Bobbie

BY
IRENE MYERS
"

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GERALD B. CARPENTER

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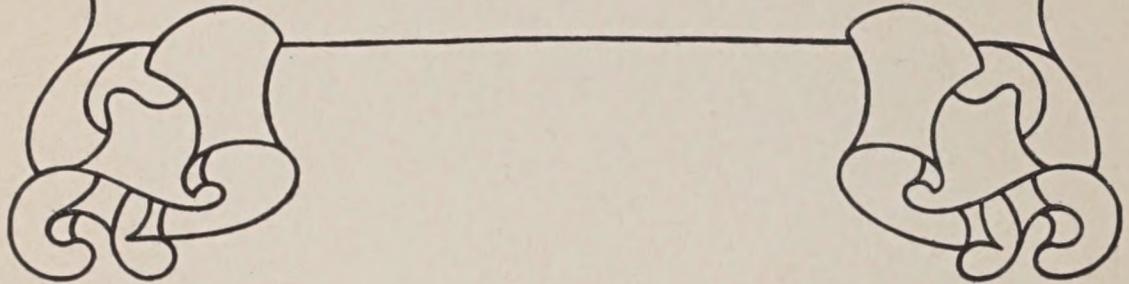
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The Face in the Forest

It was the last week in September, and college was to begin the first of October. How Ralph longed to go! Just three months previous he had graduated from the Rockport High School with very high honors—had been president and valedictorian of his class and editor of the high-school paper. He had been a conscientious student through the grammar grades and high school, and consequently was popular with the faculty. His classmates liked him because he was always honorable and square and because he was a splendid leader in fights—literary and otherwise, and they each and every one regretted that Ralph could not begin his life with a college diploma. To Ralph, however, that seemed an ideal

which it was impossible for him to attain. Never had he longed for anything as he had for a college education. He heard his classmates discussing the various schools and pointing out the advantages to be had at each; he realized more than most boys of his age what a college education meant to a man; he planned his curriculum again and again, and dreamed every night of himself at college, studying hard and making rapid advancement; he schemed and schemed, and so did his father and mother, but it was no use—they simply could not afford it.

Ralph's father was almost as disappointed as Ralph, for he loved and admired his son, and years ago, when he was a wealthy man and Ralph a mere toddling infant, he had planned to send him some day to the best college in America. During these last two weeks of vacation, when Ralph's friends and

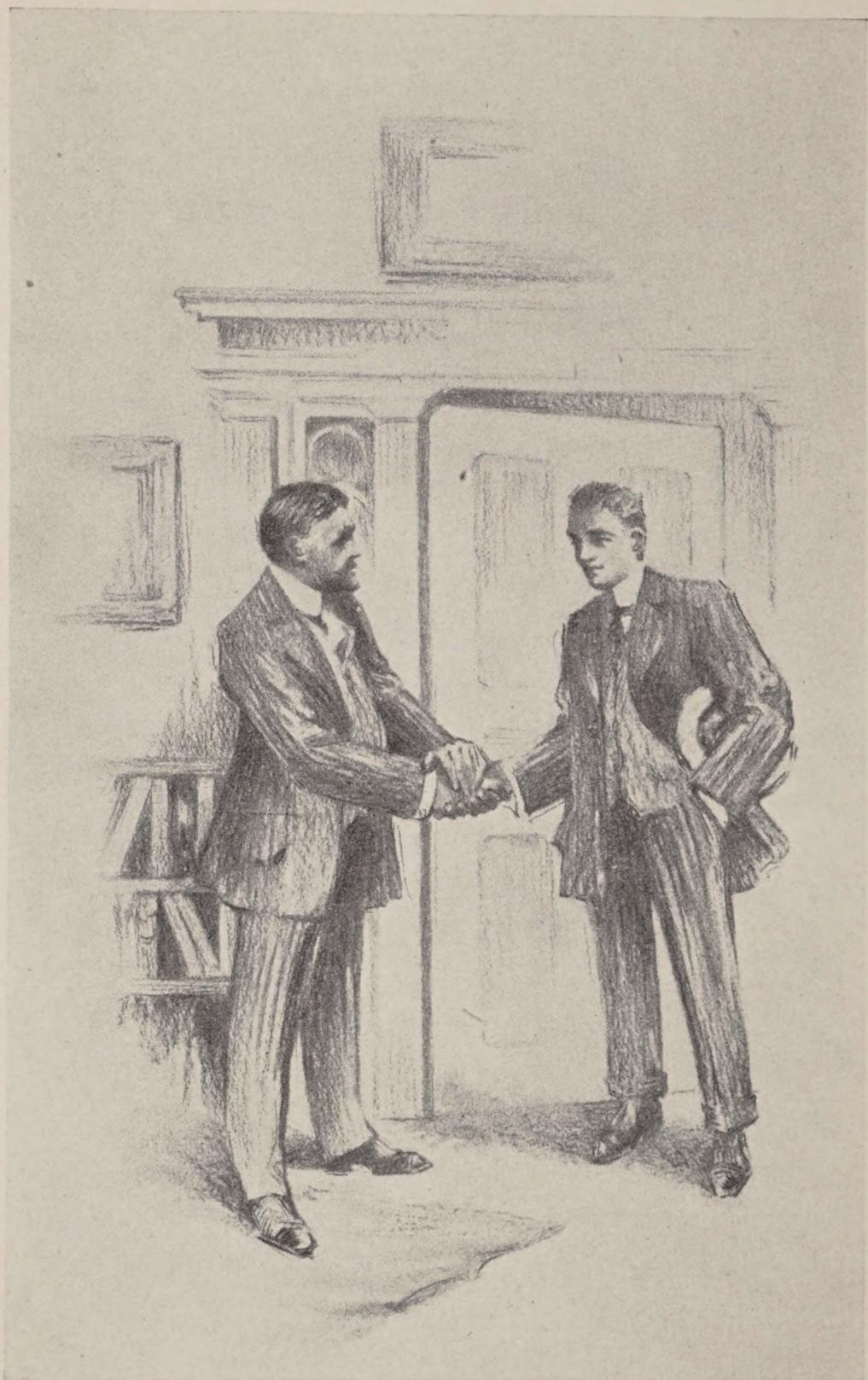
classmates were leaving one by one for college and he saw the sad look on his son's face, his thoughts turned back continually to nineteen years before, when he had been a man of means. He could see his friend, who was cashier of the bank in which he had everything, warning him to take out all his papers and money, as the bank was going to fail; he could hear the president of the bank arguing at the little window that everything would be all right, and that he had better leave his money; he could feel himself emphatically shaking his head "No," and receiving through the barred window the bag which contained his wealth—fifty thousand dollars in bonds, mortgages, and money; he could remember how heavy that bag felt, and how securely he had locked it in the iron safe at the rear of his store, feeling that he had done the best thing. But most vividly of all could he remember the shock

he received the next morning when he found that his store had been broken into, his safe dynamited, his money gone. That shock had turned his hair white, and though he had tried hard ever since that memorable morning, he had never gotten "squarely on his feet" again.

This was the trend of his thoughts when Ralph came sauntering in, looking bluer than ever. "I just saw Fred off, father," he said; "he has gone to Chicago. He didn't seem very enthusiastic about it. Gee! I wish I had his chance."

The tears came into his father's eyes and his voice trembled as he took Ralph by the hand and said: "I wish you *did* have his chance; I wish you *could* go, my son."

Ralph looked steadily at his father for a few minutes, as if he were studying him. He never realized until that moment that it was a disappointment to his father also, and that he was feeling



"I WISH YOU DID HAVE THE CHANCE, MY SON."

it very keenly. Suddenly he said, with a new ring in his voice: "That's all right, father. You've made the best of your misfortunes for nineteen years, and I'm going to make the best of my disappointment for the rest of my life. Every cloud has a silver lining, and perhaps it will all be for the best. I'm going to 'forget it,' and before I start into a winter of hard work, I'm going camping with Joe to-morrow. We've been talking about it all summer, and finally decided that if we didn't go in a hurry, we would never get there; so we're going to-morrow—that is, if you can spare me from the store. What do you think about it, father?"

"Yes, indeed, son," his father replied; "go right ahead. It will be great sport for a few days. Take whatever you need from the store, and have a good time."

Ralph spent the rest of the day and a few hours that evening in preparation

for the camping expedition, and the next morning he and Joe started before sunrise. Joe had borrowed his brother's horse and his neighbor's wagon, and together they had packed four blankets, six fishing-rods with all accompanying apparatus, a couple of guns, a tent, two cots, a change of clothing, a few groceries, some bacon, some old cooking utensils, and numerous incidentals. All day they traveled, and it was almost dark before they reached their destination, which was a very secluded spot in an immense lonely forest several miles from home. A river which ran near this spot afforded excellent opportunities for fishing and swimming, and the gentle green slope down made it an ideal place to camp.

"It looks like rain," said Ralph as he jumped off the wagon and pulled out the tent. "I guess we 'd better hurry. Joe; those clouds look heavy, and it 's

only about a half-hour till dark. If a storm comes up, our lantern won't do much good, and we 'll have to work fast to get our tent up."

The boys kept watching the clouds and worked as fast as possible. If they even thought of being tired, a distant peal of thunder urged them on; and finally, as they were bringing the things from the wagon to the tent, great drops of rain commenced to spatter. A heavy, impenetrable cloak of darkness enveloped them, and the air *seemed* thick enough to cut with a knife. However, the boys had been up so long and had had such a long, tiresome ride that they did not even light the lantern, but stumbled around in the blackness until they found their blankets and cots, on which they threw themselves in utter exhaustion, and, in spite of the loud claps of thunder and the breaking of the trees, soon fell asleep.

The storm raged and raged, and about midnight there was a peal of thunder that brought both boys to their feet in the middle of the tent.

"I thought that was Gabriel blowing his trumpet," remarked Joe.

"You must have a guilty conscience," Ralph said in a sleepy tone of voice. "I thought it was you, snoring."

"Thanks," Joe replied as he yawned expressively; "but if there are any more like that one coming, I 'd prefer to be awake—I think I can hear it better."

"That must have struck pretty near; I think it hit the foot of my cot," Ralph concluded, with a yawn even more prodigious than Joe's. "Say," he continued, "let 's take a peek out."

Carefully they felt their way to the side of the tent, where they lay down and raised the canvas very gently. A gust of wind fairly took their breath away as it whistled through the tent,

and the rain beat against their faces until they were thoroughly awakened; still they continued to look out into the blackness. The mournful wailing of the wind combined with the creaking of the trees only added forlornness to the already dismal night, and the boys *almost* wished they were home. Two or three times they dropped the canvas, but picked it up again each time in hopes that a flash of lightning would soon reveal to them something of the exterior world. It seemed as if they had lain there an hour when suddenly the very heavens were split by a flash that transformed blackness into brightness; it was only momentary, but the sight it revealed left a lifetime impression.

In among the bushes, not twenty feet away, they had seen the most ghastly, weird-looking face a mortal could possess. Long white hair, snarled and matted, blended with a heavy white beard

to make a sort of frame for this gruesome face. A pair of wild, restless eyes, with shaggy eyebrows serving as a sort of curtain, looked straight at the boys in an uncanny way. The lightning gave the whole face a sort of greenish tinge, and the boys trembled with fear.

“Oh!” groaned Ralph as his nervous fingers let the tent drop, “did you see it?”

“Yes,” whispered Joe. “Could it have been a man? It didn’t seem to have a body—at least, I didn’t see anything but just a face in the bushes.”

“Wasn’t that enough?” Ralph exclaimed.

Both fell into silence for a few minutes, but they crept a little closer together, and they did not raise the tent again that night. Neither could get to sleep again, for the shock had been such a severe one, the face such a ghastly one, and the storm such a dismal one, that they were wide awake, nervous and restless.



THE FACE IN THE FOREST.

They spent the rest of the night in speculation as to the past, present, and future of such a face; they attributed all sorts of crimes to the owner of it; they conjectured as to his dwelling, his everyday life, and as to why it was the kind such uncouthness led them to believe it was; they thought out one plot after another in which that face would prove an excellent villain; but as the hours wore away they knew no more about it than when the flash of lightning had revealed it to them in that lonely and secluded spot, with the bushes for a background.

At last dawn broke on a quiet earth, and the peace which always follows a storm reigned undisturbed except for the music of many birds. As Joe and Ralph emerged from the side of the tent *opposite* the bushes they were impressed with the grandeur of the scene. Never had it looked so beautiful, so bright, so fresh,

so perfect, and there were no harsh whistles, no clanging bells nor grating street-cars, to break the harmony. There were signs of a struggle with the elements, for broken twigs, limbs, and trees told only too plainly the havoc which had been wrought the night before; but now everything was peace, and the previous struggle was forgotten in that peace.

“Let’s take a look at those bushes,” said Joe; “I’d like to get another look at that—whatever it was.”

“On an empty stomach?” questioned Ralph. “Well, I’m ‘game’ if you are—but let’s go together.”

Stealthily they slipped around the tent until they could get a good view of the bushes, but they were quite ordinary-looking bushes in the daylight, and no face nor any trace of a human could they find; so they partially forgot the incident in their strenuous efforts to fry bacon and make coffee.

They spent the morning getting acquainted with their surroundings by exploring for short distances in various directions. They were very anxious to get another glimpse of the mysterious face they had seen the night before, so they looked into every hollow tree and cave and among the deepest foliage, in hopes of finding some sort of a dwelling which they might connect with the face; but no sign of anything pertaining to man came to their view.

“Let’s go swimming,” said Ralph after dinner, at the same time stripping off his clothes. “Perhaps we’ll see that old ‘duffer’ in the water somewhere. He looked like one of those water-kings I used to read about in fairy-books. Maybe we’ll dive into his ‘palatial residence down in the briny deep,’ or, better still, into his majesty himself.”

“All right,” said Joe, who had stripped while Ralph was rendering his latest hypothesis; “I ’ll beat you in.”

Both started on the “dead” run, and one loud splash of water told that both had gotten there at the same time. The water was just the right temperature and very deep, and consequently they enjoyed themselves immensely until they were tired out, when they crawled to shore to rest.

“Just look at that big tree across there,” said Joe, pointing to an immense tree opposite them on the other bank. “Wouldn’t it be great if we could have a grapevine swing, and swing way out across the river from it? That biggest branch which comes right over this way would be ‘a peach’ if it only had a vine on it.”

Involuntarily both boys, with their eyes, followed the branch from the trunk out, but their gaze paused about half

way, at a place where the foliage was thickest. They gasped and shivered with horror, for there, in among the thick foliage, the leaves forming a sort of frame and background, they saw that horrid face again, the wild eyes looking straight at them; but, as on the night before, it was gone in an instant.

“Oh!” they exclaimed, looking at each other; “isn’t it the limit?”

“Don’t you think the fellow who owns that face is a miserable specimen of a man?” said Joe. “The idea of always sneaking around that way and trying to scare a fellow!”

“He isn’t trying to scare us,” replied Ralph. “He’s *watching* us, and I’d a lot rather be scared than watched. I’ll tell you, Joe, it’s funny the way that old chap *acts*; he looks kind o’ scared and he acts so awfully sneaking. I’ll bet he has a guilty conscience, or else he is crazy. Let’s solve the mystery; what do you say?”

“Splendid!” cried Joe. “I ’m with you in anything you do. The very next time we see him, let ’s run him down, providing he ’s on terra firma; and if he ’s ‘up a tree,’ let ’s keep him there till we starve him down. I ’ve a sort of shaky feeling,” he continued, “and I ’d give anything if I had my gun. I guess I ’ll go up to the tent.”

“I don’t feel like swimming any more myself,” Ralph added. And with that both dressed and went up to the tent, where they lost no time in cleaning and loading their guns.

The afternoon slipped by faster than the morning, and evening found the boys smoking contentedly in front of their tent and speculating some more as to the mysterious face. Suddenly Ralph, who was planning a very complicated plot for solving the mystery, stopped in the midst of a sentence.

“Listen!” he whispered, pointing toward the river. “Splash, splash, splash,” came the gentle, measured stroke of a well-manipulated paddle, and the boys held their breath with the expectation of seeing or hearing something more.

“My! but that’s a long stroke,” Joe breathed as it already commenced to sound farther away. “Hurry, Ralph; come down to the shore,” he called as he started on the run.

Never had ground been covered in a shorter space of time and it was less than a minute till they were looking as far as eye could travel up and down the river, which had no obscuring bends or curves for a couple of miles. They looked carefully along the shore on both sides; they listened with their ears to the ground; they hid among the bushes with the expectation of hearing the “splash” once more—but it was all in vain; nothing could they see or hear.

"I 'll bet it was that face again," said Ralph, "and I 'll bet he heard every word we said and then made his escape. I 'm not going to stand it any longer, Joe. We both came out here to rest, and there 's no rest about it, either mental or physical, by day or by night, and we 'll both be subjects for an insane asylum if we don 't solve the mystery, and do it pretty quick. To-morrow let 's swim across and explore the opposite side. From the very fact that the old chap was in that tree over there this afternoon, it would be a natural conclusion that he 's familiar with both sides, and as we can 't find him or his dwelling over here, perhaps we 'll be more successful on the other side. I 'm getting so I can 't sleep, eat, or move without expecting to see that face, and somehow it gives me such an uncanny feeling."

"Them 's my sentiments,' too," Joe replied. "If we can 't get hold of him

and demand an explanation, I 'm ready to leave."

That night the boys were so nervous and excited from their day's experiences that they imagined every noise they heard was connected in some way with the mysterious face, and they pitched the contents of their tent, one after the other, at objects they saw in the dark, until there was nothing left but the cots they lay upon; even the potatoes and the few eggs which they possessed were thrown with vim, one after the other. Most of these were directed toward an object in the bushes which appeared to be all head and shoulders and which *seemed* to be gradually creeping up closer and closer, but somehow never quite got there.

As had been the case the previous night, dawn was very welcome, and as soon as it was light they hurried out to see if the thing with the big head and

shoulders was trapped in the bushes, or if it had made its escape. They were two pretty shame-faced young men when they discovered nothing but a thick tree stump about two feet high, its side nearest the tent literally plastered with eggs and its roots covered with potatoes. They both came to the conclusion that they had been very foolish, and their ardor in running down the mysterious face was somewhat dampened. However, they were positive that the face was real, for they had seen it twice in different places, and in daylight, too; so that afternoon they swam across the river and very cautiously landed on the steep and slippery bank of the opposite side.

“You go one way, Ralph, and I ’ll go the other, so we ’ll make a sort of circuit. If you see him, or anything in the way of a dwelling that looks as mysterious as he does, just blow like this three times through this whistle,” said Joe,

demonstrating and handing Ralph the whistle as he concluded.

They started off in opposite directions and tramped and tramped until nearly dusk; they looked in every hollow tree stump, and explored every empty cave; they watched the ground carefully, and examined with scrutiny every footprint they found; they searched among the densest foliage of the highest trees, and looked behind all the bushes in their path. Both were nearly exhausted, and Joe was just ready to give up when he heard, away off in the distance and to his right, Ralph's signal — three short whistles. He answered, and started off immediately in the direction of the sound, walking and running at intervals. He did not know and could not tell just how near he was, or if he was still going in the right direction, but Ralph's repeated signal soon brought him within shouting distance.

“What did you find?” he called to Ralph as he came into view.

Ralph gave him the sign to keep quiet, and he came up very softly, dodging behind trees as if he were afraid of being shot every minute. “Well, what is it?” he questioned in a breathless whisper.

“Come on and I ’ll show you,” Ralph answered.

They crept along slowly, stealthily, and silently until they came to a very low, inscrutable hut, made out of woven branches and twigs and situated in such thick foliage that it could only be seen by the closest observation. No windows, doors, nor chimneys gave it the stamp of human habitation; no sign of any living creature gave it the appearance of ever having been used for a dwelling; yet Ralph had found the fresh print of a human foot in the soft dirt, and from this fact alone had concluded that this secluded and unobtrusive structure must

be the sleeping-place, at least, of the mysterious face.

They listened very quietly, and then, as they heard no sound, they crept up closer and peered in. It was too near dark, however, to distinguish anything but a much-warped board floor, made of bits and scraps of lumber which had evidently been brought many miles; an inoffensive-looking pile of rags in the corner, which probably served the purpose of a bed; and a very small, dilapidated stove, with a battered rusty tin can upon it.

“Let ’s hide in this foliage and watch till he comes in, if it takes all night,” said Ralph. “I ’m dead tired, but after we ’ve discovered this much, let ’s stay here till we fathom the whole thing. We ’ll see what time the old chap comes in and what time he leaves, and then we can explore his ‘bungalow’ without accepting his hospitality.”

"All right," said Joe; "you climb that big tree there in front of his majesty's palace, and I 'll climb the one at the rear. Don't fall asleep and make a 'mut' out of yourself by dropping right at his feet."

"Oh!" exclaimed Ralph in a crabbed way, "I 'm just as anxious to see this through as you are, and if *any* one falls asleep, it 'll be you."

By this time darkness had settled down, and the boys waited in their cramped position for what seemed hours to them. It was such hard work to keep awake, and Joe dozed off two or three times, but caught himself each time before falling. The frogs, owls, and crickets did their best to keep them awake, and Ralph was very grateful to them. There were only two more days of camping, and he had firmly resolved that those should be spent in peace. This resolution, together with his thoughts,

helped to keep him awake, and as he lay on the branch of the big tree almost over the little hut he was lost in a reverie of what might have been.

Suddenly he was disturbed by a gentle "splash, splash, splash," coming from the river. It was the same long stroke they had heard the night before, and he formed a conclusion to one of his thoughts as he listened. Soon there was a rustling in the undergrowth and a very soft tread on the leaves. Ralph peered into the darkness, and with the aid of the dim starlight was able to discern something white moving among the bushes. A few seconds later it came more clearly to his view, and once again Ralph beheld the wizard-like face, and once again the sight of it sent a shiver over him. For a few minutes he could see nothing except the face moving hither and thither, but as the old chap gradually crept out of the undergrowth on his hands and

knees and finally stood up, just before entering the hut, he saw for the first time the uncouth, ill-clad, misshapen body. The shoulders were drawn in; the back was bent until it was easier to move on the hands and feet than upright; the legs were crooked and knotted with muscle; the arms were long and almost touched his knees; the hands and feet were exceedingly large for such a dwarfed body, and the nails were like claws. This unsightly body was clothed in rags about the waist; the rest was bare.

Ralph shuddered as he watched the old chap (more like an animal than a man) slide into the hut. He lay there thinking and thinking about the daily life of such a being. He wondered at the cause of such degeneracy, and wondered if there would not be in the hut some trace of the man's relatives. He lay there for nearly an hour, giving the old man plenty of time to become sound

asleep; then he slipped down very quietly and started toward Joe's tree. As he passed the hut he heard mutterings and grumblings the equal of which he had never heard before; once there was a gentle cry, as of a child; then again there was a terrified scream, as if someone were very much frightened. Ralph paused for a few minutes, and listened, but, as he was certain there was no one in the hut besides the old man, he concluded that he must be talking in his sleep. Here indeed was a way whereby knowledge might be gained as to the old chap's relatives; so he decided to get Joe and come back to listen.

When he reached the tree, he quietly tossed a stone up towards Joe, and then, as there was no response, he climbed the tree and called him very softly. That did not prove sufficient either, for Joe had tied himself to the branch, by means of his coat, and had gone to sleep.

“Come on, you lazy rascal,” whispered Ralph, shaking him; “and don’t make a bit of noise. The mysterious face has turned in for the night—came up the river—and he is talking in his sleep; come on and listen.”

They slid down as quietly as possible, and stole up to the very opening of the hut, where they listened long and silently. At first they heard nothing but mumblings and sounds that seemed more inhuman than human, but at last they were able to make out one word which was repeated continually, then one or two others, and finally they heard a conglomeration of words with “floor” used predominantly, as “floor—board—floor—find—want—floor.” With a groan, the old man stopped, and the boys ran back to their hiding-places as fast as possible.

Ralph was wider awake than ever for the rest of the night, and as the first rays of the sun shone into his face the

next morning he knew that he would not have much longer to wait. Just as he was thinking this he saw the misshapen body and weird face come out of the hut on hands and knees, crawl through the bushes, and disappear. A few minutes later he heard the long, measured stroke on the river, and he knew that the old chap was gone for the day.

He fairly fell out of the tree, and, running to Joe's tree, he called to him, saying: "Come down quick; he 's gone up the river, so now we can go in and explore. Let 's tear up every board of that old floor. I just know, from the way he talked in his sleep, that there 's something under it. Perhaps we can find some papers that will give a trace of his relatives, or maybe the cause of his living this kind of a life is under that floor."

By the time he had finished telling Joe this they had reached the hut and Ralph had dropped on his hands and knees and crawled in, with Joe after him.

"It seems to me," said Joe, "that this is about the dirtiest place I was ever in. Where shall we begin?"

"Let 's tear up the middle board and work out toward the edges," Ralph answered. "You get hold of that end and I 'll jerk up on this, and I guess we can do the business."

A grunt from each and a heavy creaking noise told that they had "done the business." They pulled the boards up, one after another, until they got to those upon which the pile of rags lay; the rags they kicked across the hut, and then commenced to pull up the few remaining boards.

"Oh, look here!" cried Ralph. "These boards are sawed crosswise, and these at my end are not fastened so securely as

yours. It begins to look like there was something doing, Joe. Just watch me make these boards fly. Don't bother about tearing up yours till I get these loose ones up."

One after another the boards flew across the hut until there were just four left. Ralph pulled fast and furiously, but paused suddenly, for he saw something gray and musty-looking projecting from under the last two boards. He picked it up, regardless of consequences, and ran to the opening, Joe at his heels.

"Oh, it 's a bag!" Ralph exclaimed; "gee! isn't it heavy?"

"Open it quick," Joe cried; "pull that string and turn it upside down right here in my hat."

"Oh! oh! oh!" both boys exclaimed as gold-pieces, greenbacks, and papers showered out of the bag.

"Look at those papers, Ralph, while I count the money," Joe commanded.

But the command was unnecessary, for Ralph was already opening the much-worn papers. He gasped and turned as white as a sheet, while his hand tightened on the paper until he almost tore it. Joe, glancing up and noticing Ralph's pallor, ran to him at once, asking what was the matter. Ralph tried to answer, but words failed him, and he pointed to a name on the paper.

"What!" Joe cried, "you don't mean it! And all this is rightfully his! Oh, Ralph! you don't suppose this is the fortune he had stolen so long ago?"

Ralph only nodded his head, but he commenced to pile everything back into the bag—gold, greenbacks, paper, and all. "Come, Joe," he said in a husky voice; "let 's break camp as quick as possible; we must get to town by midnight."

They packed the wagon and commenced their long drive, and this time

it seemed much longer than ever. On and on they went, not stopping for dinner or supper, up one lonely hill and down another, through forest and village, in the bright, hot sun and in the cool evening air. Never did a horse move so slowly, and never did home seem so far away. They fairly crept along, and it was very late when they finally reached the edge of the town.

All the way home Ralph had held the heavy, musty, gray bag on his lap, never releasing his grip nor relaxing his muscles one instant, and as the old horse slowed up in front of his home he sprang from the wagon and ran bounding up the steps. He reached for his key and, much to his relief, found the keyhole at once.

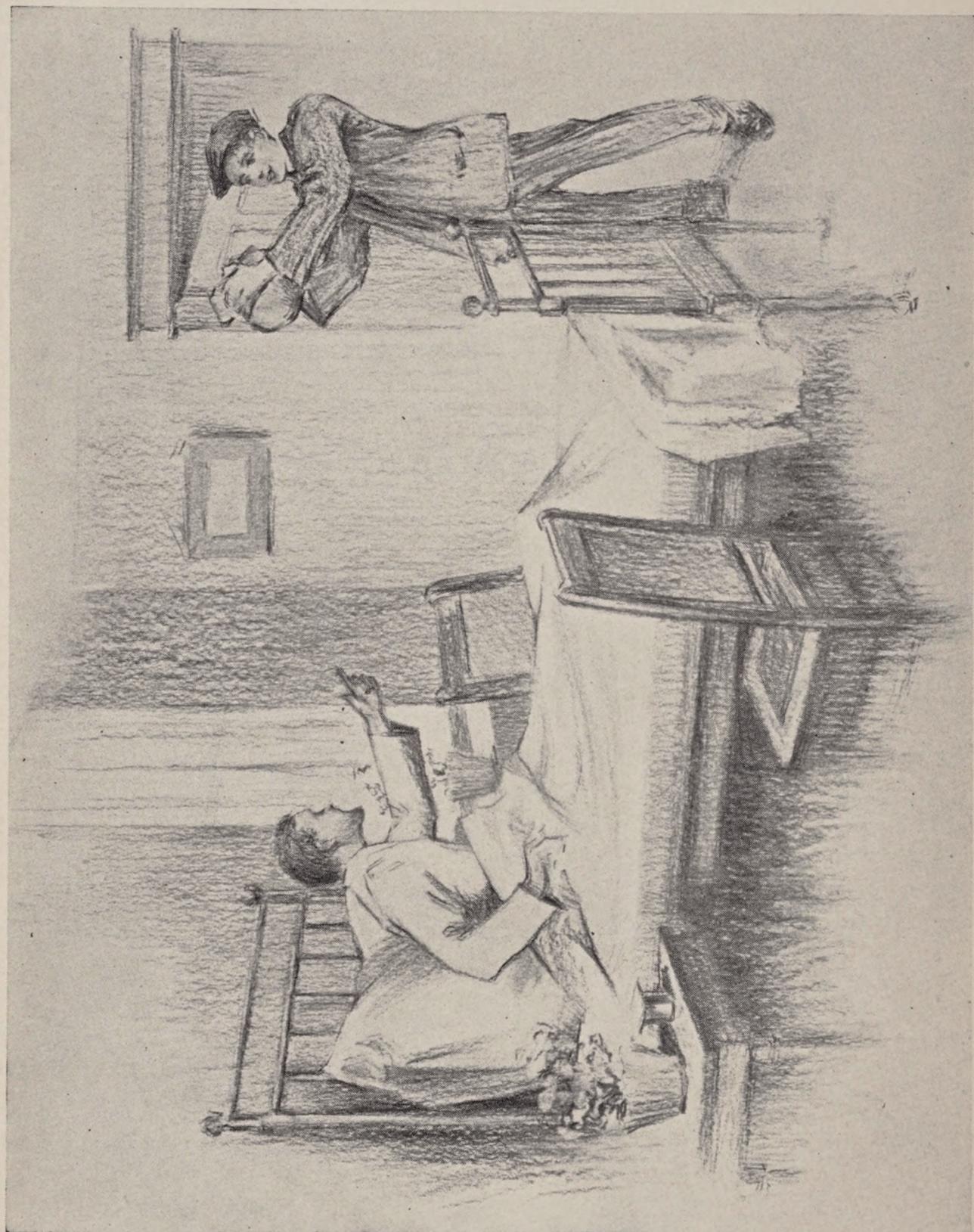
“Father! Mother!” he cried joyfully as he stumbled into the dimly lit hall; “it’s Ralph; come down quick!”

“Yes, yes, in just a minute. What’s the matter, Ralph?” his mother called.

But he could not wait; he went running up-stairs, taking three or four steps at a leap, and, rushing into his father’s room, he cried: “Say, dad, did you ever see anything that looked like this?” holding up the gray bag.

His father sat up in bed, and as he gazed he commenced to tremble; he put his hand to his head as though he thought he was dreaming, and then reached two shaking hands toward the bag, which Ralph gently handed him; he poured the contents onto the bed, and quickly scanned one paper after another; finally he dropped back on the pillow, whispering in a broken voice: “Yes, it’s mine—it’s mine—it’s mine! Tell me all about it, my boy.”

Joe, who had followed Ralph, was standing at the foot of the bed, and when he saw that Ralph was too much



"IT'S MINE, IT'S MINE, MY BOY!"

affected to give an account of their adventures, he told the story from beginning to end—giving Ralph credit for all.

When Joe had finished his narration, Ralph's father took his son by the hand and, with tears streaming down his cheeks, said: "My boy, can you get ready in three days to go to the best college in America?"

What Big Sister Brought Bobbie

“Oh! I just can’t wait,” said little Bobbie as he jumped up and down and clapped his hands. “Only one more hour and she ’ll be here. Oh! she has been gone so long and I ’ll be tickled to death to see her. Just one more hour, just one more hour, just one more hour,” he sang as he skipped out into the kitchen.

Mary, the cook, was busy peeling potatoes, but she could not resist looking up and asking little Bobbie the reason for his happiness.

“Why, don’t you know?” he said. “Can’t you guess? Isn’t this June, and isn’t College out? Big Sister is coming home, and it ’s only one more hour. She hasn’t been home for so long, and every time she comes she always brings me

something I 've been wanting so bad. I don't see how big sisters always know just exactly what little boys want—but she does, and it 's only fifty-five minutes now until she comes.

Bobbie scarcely knew what to do with himself in that fifty-five minutes; never had time seemed so long to him, and he could do nothing but skip to the gate, then to the clock, then to Mother, and back to the gate. Finally he saw, away down the road, a cab coming, which seemed to Bobbie's excited eyes to fairly creep along. Never did horses move so slowly and never did driver seem so indifferent. Inch by inch it came, until it was only three blocks away, then just two, then it reached the corner, and at last stopped in front of the house. Bobbie, who was standing on the curbing breathlessly waiting for the cab to stop, opened the door in mad haste and fell into his sister's arms before she could



**"OH! I'M SO GLAD YOU 'VE COME," HE SAID, CLINGING TIGHTLY TO
HER HAND.**

possibly alright; but, as Mother was waiting to greet Big Sister also, he had to save some of his "bear hugs" until later.

"Oh! I 'm so glad you 've come," he said, clinging tightly to her hand as they walked slowly up the walk followed by the expressman, who was struggling with a heavy trunk; "and I 've so much to tell you and so many things to show you."

Big Sister could scarcely keep back the tears as she looked down into the dear little excited face. How she had seen that face in her dreams, and how she had planned to take home something which would please Little Brother more than anything ever had, and something which would be very much of a surprise and would continue to be a surprise all summer!

"Well," she said, perched on her trunk half an hour later, with Bobbie at her feet and Mother not far away; "I 've brought Bobbie something that will sure-

ly surprise him, but I don't think I shall give it to him to-day, and maybe not to-morrow. I'm not going to tell just when I'm going to give it to him—that is going to be a surprise, too; maybe it'll be this week, and maybe it'll be a long time—we'll see."

Bobbie looked just a wee bit disappointed, but he was so glad to have Sister home again that he was perfectly willing to wait, and ran out to tell his playmates that "she'd come."

That night, when Mother, Father, and Big Sister were seated at the table, they all looked rather worried, for it was nearly 6:30 and Bobbie could not be found. Seven o'clock came, and 7:30, and still Bobbie did not come.

Dinner was over, and Mother was very much worried, when the door suddenly flew open and in rushed Bobbie, all out of breath. "You know our washwoman's little boy," he panted, looking at his

mother; "you know he carries washings to his mother, and you know how far she lives and how much he has to carry sometimes; well, I saw him coming down the street with a great big basket full of clothes, and he looked so pale and weak—honestly, Mother, he could hardly walk; so I asked him if he wouldn't put his load on my new 'Irish Mail' and let me take it home for him. He was so thankful he almost cried, and I wheeled it all the way to his house. He got so sick that I had to wheel him on top of the clothes some of the way, and I had to go awful slow, but we finally got there. He thought my 'Irish Mail' was so nice and just the thing to carry clothes on; he said it would help him a lot if he had one like it, but he supposed he would never have money enough to get him one. I felt so sorry for him, Mother, that I just gave it to him."

“Why, Bobbie!” exclaimed his mother, “you don’t mean you gave him your *new* ‘Irish Mail’ that you ’ve wanted so long?”

“Yep,” replied Bobbie, “that’s what I done.”

Big Sister listened very attentively to little Bobbie’s breathless account of where he had been and what he had done, and when he finished, she slipped quietly out of the room, went upstairs to her trunk, and quickly opened the lid; she pulled out a large bag and slid her hand into it, but it did not take long to find what she wanted, and her hand came out with a package in it. She went silently back down-stairs and straight to Bobbie, who was holding his head in his hands and looking thoughtfully at the floor. “Here, Bobbie, I guess I can give it to you to-day, after all,” she said as she handed him the package.

Bobbie looked up surprised, but lost no time in untying the string and removing the paper. It felt hard, and when he moved it, something jingled; he caught a glimpse of something bright, and when he finally got the last paper off, he found a nice bright bank with twenty-five shining copper pennies in it.

“Oh!” he exclaimed, jumping up and down, “that’s just what I wanted to put my pennies in, and now I can save up enough to get another ‘Irish Mail.’ Mother, Mother, just see what Sister brought me! It’s even nicer than the one I saw down in the store window and wanted so bad. Oh! it’ll hold a lot of pennies, and I’m going to put every one I get into it till it’s clear full, and then I’m going to buy an ‘Irish Mail,’ a picture-book, a knife, and—and—a lot of things.”

“Bobbie,” said Big Sister, after he had quieted down, “can you play that I’m

a fairy this summer? You know that no one ever knows what fairies are going to do next or when they are going to do it, but good little boys are always glad to have them around. It was very thoughtful and kind of you to help the wash-woman's little boy, and very unselfish in you to give him your wagon, and the fairy is proud of Bobbie. Suppose you see this summer how many kind deeds you can do for others and how unselfish you can be. You know we never lose anything by giving to others, and it soon becomes a habit that everyone admires. Now run out and play, and don't forget to put all your pennies in your new bank."

Bobbie threw his arms around Big Sister's neck and gave her a real hard hug; then he kissed her and ran out to play for a few minutes before going to bed. He was very happy—he thought because of his new gift; Sister thought because

he had made the washwoman's little boy happy. Perhaps it was both.

One hot afternoon, about two weeks later, Mother and Sister heard a pounding in Bobbie's room, and, after a few minutes, went in to see what had caused it. There in the middle of the floor was Bobbie's new bank with the door broken open and the pennies gone. They could not imagine who had gotten into the bank, and they dreaded to tell Bobbie that night, for fear he would be disappointed.

However, they were spared the trouble, for Bobbie came in that evening with a very radiant, happy face. "Can't guess what I done this afternoon, Sis," he said. "I suppose you 'll scold me 'cause I broke my new bank, but I had to—it wouldn't come open."

"Why, Bobbie!" cried Mother and Sister together, "was it you who broke the bank? Why did you do it?"

"Guess," replied Bobbie; "give you three chances. Please try."

After several guesses by Mother and Sister, Bobbie said: "Well, Elsie—"

"Who is Elsie?" interrupted Big Sister.

"Why," answered Bobbie, "she 's the little girl who lives down in the next block, and last week she fell out of the apple-tree and broke her leg. This afternoon I was down there to play, and she said she wanted a picture-book *so* bad—one with stories about boys and girls and animals, and one with colored pictures. She said she wished and wished for one all the time, but no good fairy seemed to hear her. So I thought I 'd play like I was a good fairy just once and bring her one, and that 's what I spent my money for. I hid it under the pillow on her bed, and I 'm sure she 'll find it to-night; then she 'll think the good fairy heard her, after all."



"IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOU SPENT YOUR MONEY IN A VERY GOOD WAY,
BOBBIE," SAID MOTHER.

“It seems to me that you spent your money in a very good way, Bobbie,” Mother said as she drew the weary little fellow up onto her lap, where she told him stories until he fell asleep.

That night, before Sister went to bed, she slipped once more to the trunk and took another package from the bag, which she now called her “fairy bag.” She went softly into Bobbie’s room and laid it on a chair by his bed.

Early the next morning everyone in the house was awakened by gleeful exclamations coming from Bobbie’s room. Finally he came running down the hall to Mother’s and Father’s room, shouting: “Just look here! Isn’t it a peach? And I wanted one *so* bad. Just look at that big blade and this little one! And it’s got a pearl handle! Father, it’s as big as yours, and I’ll bet it’s sharper!”

Suddenly he stopped and was lost in thought a minute; then, without saying

another word, he ran into Big Sister's room and climbed in bed with her.

After thanking her in his sweet little way, he said: "Say, Sister, do you suppose I made the washwoman's little boy and Elsie as happy as you have made me this morning?"

"Yes, I 'm sure that you made them just as happy," she replied.

"Well," said Bobbie, "I 'm going to play like I was a fairy too, then, all the time. It 's awfully nice to be as happy as I am this morning, and I 'm going to try to make someone just as happy every day."

Sister felt as if the "fairy bag" had accomplished half of its mission already, and before the summer was gone it had served its purpose well, for Bobbie learned to be thoughtful, unselfish, and considerate, and it grew to be a habit. His playmates all loved him, and the neighbors all thought he was a very good boy.

To Bobbie the summer was full of surprises and very short; short because it was such a happy one, and a happy one because he had learned one of the greatest and best secrets of life—the secret of making others happy through thoughtfulness and unselfishness.

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